[Medieval Georgia]

THE MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES

such favours was called *shedsqaleba* and the *sigeli* granting it— *dsqalobis-sigeli*. *Shedsqaleba* was practised widely in Georgia as well by the kings as by patrons, great and small. *Shedsqaleba* indeed became a powerful political factor as we shall presently see in the hands of the kings and was used to the advantage of the *msakhuri* class as against the *aznauri*. 566

A separate group of *qmani* was constituted by the so-called *Nadsqalobevi qmani*. In the Code of Laws of Wakhtang VI (1703–24) these *qmani* were called *dsqalobis qmani*. Whether the same term was used in ancient times is not yet definitely known. A *nadsqalobevi qma* was one given away as a gift by way of *shedsqaleba*; such a *qma* was given by a patron to another loyal and *shedsqalebuli qma*.

Insolvency was one of the primary causes of the enserfment of free men. An insolvent debtor "*is slave of his creditor and a slave bought whose service is never-ending*" states one of the documents. This occurred often when money was borrowed at compound interest. Compound interest has this peculiarity that it "*early begins to accumulate and infinitely multiplies the original*". Thus because of the rapid increase by successive additions of the interest to the original loan, the debtor was in the end confronted with the payment of so great a sum that often he was unable to settle it and in consequence either he was compelled to become his creditor's slave or he died before he could effect a settlement of any kind. Then, to quote our source, "before the eyes unfolded the sight pitiable, the free sons for the debts of their fathers were taken for sale".[1] 566 686

A landowner would place a *qma* on his land only when it was vacant. The act of so placing a *qma* was called "placing or settling upon the land".[2] 566 427

Tributes or taxes paid by the peasants for holding lands for cultivation were called *begara*. *Begara* was of different kinds. A *begara* levied for holding vineyards was called *kalukhi* and for holding ordinary fields *ghala*. [423]

The holding of lands subject to the payment of *begara* called in Georgian *sabegrod gatsema* did not necessarily entail the relation of serf to patron. The patron-client relationship demanded service or to use the Georgian expression "the slavish service" of a *qma*, and of a patron the placing or settlement of such a peasant on his land. *Sabegrod gatsema*

[1] See the eleventh-century *sigelni* of Nicortsminda in Jordania's *Kronikebi*, II, 47.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 135.